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Socialism Is Without Ancient Precedent

by

Ch'ang Hsiang (常翔)

(Hsüeh-hsi yü P'i-p'an [Study and Criticism], No. 8, August 20, 1974)

When the upsurge in agricultural cooperativization was flourishing in China's countryside in 1955, our great leader Chairman Mao made important comments on an article "An Agricultural Producer Cooperative Which Boosted Its Yield by 67% Within Three Years." This cooperative was what now is Ch'enchiachuang brigade in Ch'üfu hsien, Shantung Province. In his comments Chairman Mao contrasted socialism with what Confucius had preached and warmly praised the socialist activism of the vast numbers of peasants in taking the cooperativization road and fully affirmed the superiority of the socialist system. Chairman Mao pointed out: "After the people, who remained impoverished for more than two thousand years, had run cooperatives for three years, their lives economically and culturally began to change in outlook. This proves that socialism as it is indeed has no ancient precedent. Compared with Confucian 'classics,' socialism is much better and by a wide margin. Regarding those who are interested in visiting Confucian temples and Confucian woods, I would advise them to take a look at this cooperative if it is not out of their way."

In his above remarks, Chairman Mao was referring to Liu Shao-ch'i, the biggest capitalist-roader and power-holder within the Party, and company. He was relentless in exposing and vigorous in criticizing their crimes of honoring Confucius and reading the Classics, having interest in promoting capitalist restoration instead of practicing Marxism and socialism.

Confucian "classics" embodies what Confucius preached about his "restoration classics," such as "restraining oneself and returning to propriety," and "restoring the states that have been extinguished, reviving families whose line of succession has been broken, and calling to office those who have fallen into obscurity." Reactionary ruling classes in successive ages all regarded Confucian "classics" and dogma as a magic to keep them in power. Just as Lu Hsün pointed out: "Confucius devised outstanding methods of governing the state, but these were thought up to rule the people for the sake of those in authority; there was nothing of any value to the people."

Representatives of opportunist lines inside the Party are the agents of the landlord and bourgeois classes. They oppose Marxism and practice revisionism, and in doing so they are bound to follow the footsteps of the reactionary classes in successive ages, such as worshipping Confucius and reading the classics and taking Confucian "classics" as their reactionary ideological weapon to restore capitalism. Whenever the proletarian revolution entered a crucial stage, representatives of

opportunist lines within the Party would invariably come out to promote honoring Confucius and reading the classics, vainly trying to stop the advance of the revolution. When the revolution entered the historical period of socialism, Liu Shao-ch'i, chieftain of opportunist lines inside the Party, continuously produced Confucian "classics" to oppose socialist revolution. He "showed very little interest in the socialist enterprise which had to be tackled although he was labeled a communist." When the people of the whole country were engrossed in agrarian reform in a big way and enthusiastically participated in the movement for mutual aid and cooperation in agriculture in the spring of 1951, Liu Shao-ch'i hurriedly headed for Ch'ufu to "pay homage to the sage." In a show of due respect to the Confucian temple, he prostrated himself before a statue of Confucius, shouting repeatedly: "The venerable Master K'ung is great! The venerable Master K'ung is great!" "The venerable Master K'ung is a sage and the People's Government should make sacrificial offerings to him." He was also most impressed by a pavilion built by a feudal emperor near that place for resting purposes. This fully exposed Liu Shao-ch'i's keen interest in Confucian temples and Confucian woods, indicating that he was invoking the departed spirit of Confucius to safeguard and preserve the exploitation system handed down from antiquity through the ages and realize his reactionary program of restoring capitalism.

The high tide of cooperativization which flourished in China's countryside in 1955 coincided with the great socialist revolution upsurge which appeared in the wake of the campaign to criticize Liu Shao-ch'i's Right opportunist or revisionist line. This revolution began to change the poor and blank outlook and backward features of the Chinese countryside, a vigorous testimony to the thesis that "socialism is many times better than Confucian 'classics'." However, faced by the immense victories of socialist revolution Liu Shao-ch'i desperately clung to the Confucian "classics" and stubbornly sought to roll the wheel of history back. Guided by the general line for building socialism in 1958 and amid songs of triumph in praise of the big leap forward, the rural people's commune appeared as a newborn thing in the broad horizon in east Asia. The people's commune movement was a great revolution much more penetrating than the movement for agrarian reform and mutual aid and cooperation. The reactionaries at home and abroad were deeply apprehensive and bitterly resentful. They formed an anti-China "holy alliance" and whipped up in 1962 a big anti-China chorus to sway public opinion. Liu Shao-ch'i and company also hurriedly picked up the tattered banners of the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius and in close coordination with the anti-China chorus dished up the sinister <u>On Cultivation</u>, a book which quoted the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius to oppose proletarian dictatorship. With the backing of the bourgeois headquarters commanded by Liu Shao-ch'i, forums discussing Confucian preachings and meetings in commemoration of Confucius mushroomed and flourished. Applauding Confucius out of all proportions, they vainly sought to use Confucian "classics" to revive the exploitation system in China and to establish a bourgeois fascist dictatorship.

Liu Shao-ch'i and company, however, were just daydreaming. Just as Chairman Mao pointed out: "Although opportunists seeking to stem the tide are found almost everywhere, the tide is invariably irresistible. Socialism is advancing triumphantly everywhere, leaving all the stumbling-blocks behind." Once the agricultural cooperativization movement got started in China, it was led by Chairman Mao to firmly oppose the sabotage activities carried out by Liu Shao-ch'i and company. The movement kept moving forward in accordance with the line, principles, policies and steps personally laid down by Chairman Mao. By 1955, the socialist transformation of agriculture in China had achieved tremendous and great results. The broad countryside in China, like Ch'enchiachuang, "began to change its economic and cultural outlook after running cooperatives for three years." With vastly increased farm yields and flourishing development of capital construction of farmland and irrigation projects, development was also achieved in the fields of culture, education and public health. After three years of cooperativization, there were changes in people's thinking and in the yields of the land. Recognizing the superiority of the socialist system, the peasants by and large said happily: "Big changes have occurred after running cooperatives for three years. Output has gone up, life has improved, illiteracy has dropped, people have flourished."

The answers to all this can nowhere be found in Confucian "classics," which had been circulated in China for more than two thousand years and which had impoverished the Chinese people for that long. Ch'enchiachuang, an epitome of the old Chinese countryside, exemplifies Confucian domination of China in the old days. This village was once inhabited by over 300 households. But under the exploitation of the "Confucian House," only 58 families survived on the eve of the liberation. Of these, 21 families fled famine and went begging for food in other villages, while another 21 households became hired hands to the landlords, three families had to sell their children and 21 persons died of starvation outside their own village.

Only by smashing the spiritual yoke imposed by Confucian "classics" and taking the socialist road can the long-suffering Chinese people free themselves from poverty and privations. The basic completion of agricultural cooperativization enabled more than 500 million peasants to take the socialist road of collectivization and smash Liu Shao-ch'i's fond dream of vainly trying to use Confucian "classics" to change China. "The people's commune is a golden bridge, one that leads to communism." The great proletarian cultural revolution smashed the Liu Shao-ch'i renegade clique and further consolidated China's socialist system.

Liu Shao-ch'i wanted to halt socialism, but he ended up in his own collapse. Opportunists seeking to stem the tide, however, have since not been extinguished. After the collapse of the Liu Shao-ch'i renegade clique, the Lin Piao anti-Party clique sprang out in a futile attempt to use Confucian "classics" to change China. Renegade and traitor Lin Piao represented all the overthrown reactionary classes. He was a

typical Confucius worshipper. He never read books or newspapers and was completely unfamiliar with Marxism-Leninism. But he admired Confucian "classics" and viciously slandered socialism as "the present is not as good as the past." He described the life of the peasants as one of "a shortage of food and clothing" and likened the consolidation of proletarian dictatorship to "crises all round." Lin Piao advocated honoring Confucius and reading the classics for the sinister purpose of realizing his reactionary program of "restraining oneself and returning to propriety," restoring capitalism in China, turning socialist China into a Soviet revisionist colony and plunging the Chinese people into the dark abyss of old society.

But the wheel of history after all cannot be rolled back. The great proletarian cultural revolution smashed the two bourgeois headquarters commanded respectively by Liu Shao-ch'i and Lin Piao and aroused the socialist activism of the Chinese people. Ch'enchiachuang, dominated by Confucian "classics" for more than two thousand years, has now become a land of stable and high yields, in times of drought and waterlogging, with a per-mow yield of grain reaching 1,300 catties, ten times the figures registered before the liberation. Large tracts of farmland planted with food crops and fruit trees have covered 800 mow of swampland where nothing grew before. With heavy-tonnage trucks, tractors and electrically-powered farm machines in operation and schools offering ten-year courses to all school-age children, and having brought up more than 100 middle school students and three university students, Ch'enchiachuang's changed outlook represents an epitome of the present features of China's broad countryside. The Chinese countryside today is everywhere one of flourishing prosperity, where the socialist system has become increasingly consolidated. With agricultural bumper harvests brought in year after year, forestry, livestock breeding, subsidiary occupations and fisheries in all-round development, culture, education and public health in flourishing development, the living standards of the peasants have improved constantly.

Socialism is just fine, many times better than Confucian "classics." Liu Shao-ch'i, Lin Piao and company opposed socialism and moved against the historical tide only to see Confucius holding the "classics" in their hands. All opportunists who have vainly tried to promote restoration and retrogression will have the same ending, and there is no escape for them.

* * *

On Shang Yang's Conception of History

by

K'ang Li (康 立) and Shih Yüeh (史 鉞)

(Hsüeh-hsi yü P'i-p'an [Study and Criticism], No. 8, August 20, 1974)

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the Legalist and the Confucianist schools, as opposing forces, advanced two fundamentally different political lines. To go with them, two basically antagonistic conceptions of history were formed in the ideological field. Shang Yang was the first Legalist representative who rose to criticize the Confucianist reactionary conception of history. The "Book of Lord Shang" reflected in a concentrated way Shang Yang's progressive conception of history, and laid the theoretical foundation for the newly emerging landlord class to overthrow slave-owners rule and establish the landlord class dictatorship.

(I)

Shang Yang lived in a time of great social upheaval marked by the transition of slavery to feudalism. In this violent social change, the Confucianist and Legalist schools, starting from different class stands, put forward completely different views on the development of social history.

The historical concept of a given class serves the political line of that class. "The partisan struggle in the field of philosophy, in the final analysis, manifests the propensities and ideological systems of opposing classes in modern society. Like that of 2,000 years ago, the latest philosophy is partisan in character." More than 2,000 years ago, Confucius urged everyone to "have faith in and love the ancients" ("Shu Erh, Analects"), and Mencius openly called for "imitating the ancient kings." Their aim was to use the revivalist and regressive conception of history as the theoretical basis for pushing the political line of "restraining oneself and returning to propriety." In the State of Ch'in, the political representatives of the slave-owning nobles, Kan Lung and Tu Chih, used the reactionary historical conception that "there is nothing wrong in imitating the ancients and nothing evil in following the rules of propriety" to oppose Shang Yang's landlord class reform movement. (See "Reform, Book of Lord Shang") The revolution in philosophy was the precursor of political reform. To carry out reform, it was necessary first of all to launch the criticize-Confucius movement on the ideological front and to unfold criticism of the Confucianist reactionary conception of history. Unless this was done, no new feudal system could be established, and even if it were established, it could not be consolidated.

Before introducing reform in the State of Ch'in, Shang Yang had, in the presence of Duke Hsiao of Ch'in, engaged Kan Lung, Tu Chih and others in a battle of words. During the debate, he lashed out at the metaphysical

theory of immutability of the declining slave-owning class by using the reform theory of the newly emerging landlord class that "laws are enacted in accordance with current needs and rites are devised in light of prevailing circumstances." (Ibid.) The Confucianist conception of history was both reactionary and metaphysical. Obstinately clinging to the "rule of propriety," the Confucianists presented the slave system of the Chou Dynasty as that of a perfectly ideal society. "How elegant are its rules and regulations," said Confucius, "I follow Chou." He believed that history, developed to the time of Western Chou, had reached its zenith and need no longer develop or advance. He lamented that the social change in the Spring and Autumn period brought about the "decay in rites and music," smearing the excellent situation of the revolution as "one of lawlessness under Heaven" and calling for turning the wheel of history back and restoring the old order. In view of the Confucianist revivalist concept of unchanging history, Shang Yang, employing the Legalist progressive historical concept, compared the different superstructures of the ancient primitive clan society in legends and the slave societies of Yin and Chou, and pointed out that history was on the march all the time. He divided history into three stages--the "upper age," the "middle age" and the "lower age," thinking that "in the upper age people loved their parents and relatives and were selfish; in the middle age people admired men of wisdom and were mindful of benevolence; and in the lower age people valued honors and respected officials." ("Opening Up the Mind, Book of Lord Shang") In short, as times changed, political institutions ought to alter too. In the chapter "Strategy," he specifically verified the different stages of development in Chinese history: The earliest stage was "the primitive society" when people lived as hunters. Then came the period of Shen Nung [the legendary Emperor of Husbandry] when "men farm to provide food and women weave to provide clothing," and people began to engage in agricultural production. Shen Nung was followed by a period in which "the strong defeat the weak and the many prevail over the few;" that is to say, the phenomenon of oppression of the many by the few began to appear. By the time of Huang Ti [the Yellow Emperor], dictated by the needs of the new historical epoch, there was established "the order of distinction between the ruler and his subjects," and "swords and saws are used at home and armor and soldiers are used abroad," that is, punishments were meted out domestically and force of arms was used externally. "Swords and saws" and "armor and soldiers" gave expression to the two functions of the State, one being internal and the other external. Seen from the Marxist viewpoint, this was the state machine of the slave-owning class dictatorship.

As referred to by Shang Yang, the "age of hunters" and the "age of Shen Nung" were roughly equivalent to the fishing and hunting stage of the primitive society (period of ignorance) and to the stage of agricultural production (period of savagery). Classes and states had not yet appeared in those times. "Huang Ti," symbolic of the necessity of establishing a slave-owner state, reflected the emergence of class oppression and exploitation during the late stages of the clan society, marking the historical stage of transition from alliances of primitive tribes to the establishment of states of slave-owner dictatorship. Shang

Yang believed that a state was born to prevent "chaos" and the "sages," in order to "prevent chaos," formulated all sorts of institutions and regulations. It was necessary to "set up prohibitions" and "establish officials." Finally, in order to centralize the appointment of "officials," "a ruler was installed." ("Opening Up the Mind, Book of Lord Shang") Although such a theory of the origin of the state regarded the "sage" as the prime mover of history, although it had not gone beyond the scope of the idealist conception of history, and although it did not correctly explain the origin of the state, yet by showing the different stages of development, it demonstrated that history was ever developing and advancing and was not frozen or unchangeable. That it had made a certain contribution to the history of human knowledge should be acknowledged. Being the first thinker in Chinese history who elucidated the origin of the state from the viewpoint of developing history, Shang Yang to a certain extent intuitively perceived that the state machine did not exist from the very beginning but was a product of a certain historical stage of development of human society and an outcome of the development and changes of the time and situation. This then was forceful criticism of the Confucianist theory of Heavenly will that "life and death are preordained and honors and riches come from Heaven" and idealist conception of history that "the power of the sovereign is given by God." It provided a theoretical basis for the "rule of law" policy of the newly emerging landlord class. In the West, views similar to those of Shang Yang on the various stages of social history and the origin of class society appeared only 2,200 years later, when they were expounded in Rousseau's "The Origin of Inequality" published in the mid-18th century. Here we can see the importance of Shang Yang's conception of history in the world's ideological history.

The ideological line is the theoretical basis for the political line. Shang Yang's conception of history ideologically paved the way for the political practice of replacing the slave system by the feudal system. He propounded the inevitable appearance of the slave state for the purpose of proving that it did not exist from the beginning of antiquity and was not unchangeable at all. On the contrary, as history developed, "Chou did not imitate Shang, nor did Hsia imitate Yü. The situation varied in the three dynasties, and they all flourished at a time by adopting policies suited to the time." (Ibid.) As times changed, the methods of governing should also be changed correspondingly. Thus he eloquently proved the necessity and rationality of substituting the feudal system for the slave system. Mencius, however, believed that the "Five Chief Lords [Pa]" of the Spring and Autumn period were sinners against the "Three Kings" of Hsia, Shang and Chou, and that the princes in his time were sinners against the "Five Chief Lords." Shang Yang contended that "the Three Dynasties thrived on different rites and the Five Chief Lords became powerful through enforcing different laws." From the "Three Kings" to the "Five Chief Lords" represented historical progress. ("On Reform, Book of Lord Shang") He refuted the Confucianists for arbitrarily raising the status of the "Three Kings" and downgrading the roles of the "Five Chief Lords," and condemned them for propagating the reactionary conception of history that one generation was worse than the one preceding it. He

pointed out explicitly: "Since different things were instructed in former ages, why should we imitate the ancients? Since kings and emperors did not copy from each other, why should we observe the rites of the previous ages?" (Ibid.) The development of society had always been marked by the supersession of the old by the new; hence, there was no historical basis whatsoever for "imitating the ancients" or "observing old rites." After studying and summing up the historical lessons, both positive and negative, provided by the three dynasties of Hsia, Shang and Chou, he came to the conclusion that King T'ang of Shang and King Wu of Chou rose to power because they "enacted laws in accordance with current needs and devised rites in light of prevailing circumstances," and that "Yin and Hsia perished because they did not change the rules and regulations." (Ibid.) Therefore, sticking to the old rules and reviving the old was the way to national extinction. It was precisely on the basis of his understanding of continuing changes and progress of social history that Shang Yang raised the slogan "There is more than one way to govern a state, and there is no need to follow the ancient examples," (Ibid.) thus dealing a telling blow to the reactionary revivalists of the Confucianist school. Shang Yang held that policies, laws and decrees had to change in keeping with the changes of the situation, saying "when regulations and laws are set in accordance with the time, government will function smoothly." (Ibid.) This progressive conception of history became a mighty ideological weapon for Shang Yang's reforms.

While personally participating in the revolutionary practice of overthrowing the slave-owning aristocrats, Shang Yang not only saw the inexorable trend toward the replacement of the slave system by the feudal system, but realized, vaguely, the importance of a correct conception of history and ideological line to the formulation of policies by the newly emerging landlord class, to guaranteeing the success of the reform. He said: Only by "knowing the ongoing trend and the developing situation" could we "run a government that can govern effectively," "issue orders that will be obeyed," and secure the "loyalty of the people under Heaven." ("Strategy, Book of Lord Shang") Therefore, if we were to establish the rule of the landlord class throughout the country, we must criticize the Confucianist reactionary conception of history. He maintained that "benevolence and righteousness are insufficient to govern the world," (Ibid.) and that only the philistines would believe in sophistries without talking about the legal system and would believe in what was described as benevolence and righteousness without talking about utility. ("On Prudent Exercise of Law, Book of Lord Shang") Summing up the historical experiences of the struggle between the newly emerging landlord class and the reactionary Confucianists, Shang Yang pointed out: "The rise of a state is due to farming and war," whereas the Confucianist poetry, writings, propriety, music, filial piety and brotherhood "are useless to the government." ("Agriculture and War, Book of Lord Shang") He regarded the Confucianists as fleas and parasites, thinking that if things were done according to their reactionary precepts, "land will be lost if the enemy comes, and in the absence of enemy incursion the people will be impoverished." (Ibid.) When introducing the reform, therefore, Shang Yang adopted the revolutionary measure of "burning the books of poetry and

documents and elucidating the laws," ("Mr. Ho, Han Fei Tzu") thus both ideologically and politically imposing a dictatorship upon the Confucianists. Moreover, on the basis of criticizing the false "benevolence and righteousness" of the Confucianists, he put forward the shining ideas of "eliminating punishments by punishments" and "eliminating wars by wars." ("Strategy, Book of Lord Shang") Internally, he called for rewarding those who performed military merit, abolishing the hereditary system of office and emolument, universally adopting the prefecture-county system, strengthening the central authority, and intensifying the dictatorship of the newly emerging landlord class. Externally, he advocated a progressive war aimed at national unification in order to eliminate wars among princes of reactionary slave-owners, and replacing the slave-owners dictatorship with the landlord class dictatorship.

In essence, the struggle between the Confucianist and Legalist conceptions of history was a struggle between two social systems--the slave system and the feudal system. Hence, Shang Yang's progressive conception of history was regarded by the Confucianists as a thorn in their side. During his life, he suffered a frantic converging attack by the Confucianists Kan Lung, Tu Chih and Chao Liang. After his death, he was abused and vilified by the reactionary Confucianists represented by Mencius. However, progressive ideas, far from being strangled, evinced their power with increasing clarity following the advance of history. In the struggle to criticize the revivalist absurdities of the Confucianist school, Hsün K'uang and Han Fei, outstanding representatives of the Legalist school, defended and developed Shang Yang's conception of history. Hsün K'uang severely criticized Mencius' fallacies about "imitating the ancient kings" and proposed the progressive theory of "imitating the later kings and instituting a uniform system." ("The Effects of Confucianism, Hsün Tzu") Han Fei further developed Shang Yang's conception of history by dividing history into three historical stages--the "remote antiquity," "the middle antiquity," and "the contemporary epoch"--which roughly corresponded with the primitive society, the slave society and the feudal society. He believed that "past and present have different customs, new and old adopt different measures." To govern a state well, it was essential that "we not follow the ancient laws nor observe the established rules and regulations." ("The Five Vermin, Han Fei Tzu") If one still wanted to return to the old when history had developed, one would become a foolish stump watcher. It was precisely on the basis of accepting the progressive views of history of such Legalists as Shang Yang and Han Fei that Ch'in Shih Huang "abolished the laws of the early kings and burned the books of the hundred schools." ("The First Emperor of Ch'in, Historical Records") He thoroughly enforced the political line of replacing the dictatorship of the slave-owning class with that of the landlord class, and by doing so, established the first feudal country of central authority in Chinese history.

(II)

"Shang of Wei broke up the field boundaries, and the institutions established by him were observed by the succeeding hundred generations." ("Brief Study of the Annals of Wang An-shih, Appendixes, Vol. I") Shang

Yang's ideological and political lines, founded on the basis of a historical concept of continuing social progress, reflected the demands of the new production relations at the time, conformed to the tides of the time, and produced far-reaching influence in history.

Throughout the whole of feudal society, however, there had all along been two diametrically different historical appraisals of Shang Yang and his progressive conception of history. All reactionary and decadent forces invariably did their utmost to launch such an unjust attack on Shang Yang and his Legalist thinking that even the bourgeois revolutionist Chang T'ai-yen pointed out with indignation: "Shang Yang has been subject to vilification and slander for two thousand years, and especially so in the present day." ("Shang Yang, Chiu Shu [On Slander]") On the other hand, progressive classes or political forces inherited Shang Yang's Legalist thinking and defended him. How to evaluate Shang Yang was an important aspect of the polemics between the Confucianist and Legalist schools in feudal society.

In the early years of the Han Dynasty, following the establishment of landlord class domination, feudal rulers gradually turned from being pro-Legalist and anti-Confucianist to being pro-Confucianist and anti-Legalist. The big landlord conservatives and their ideological representative Tung Chung-shu fired the volley of shots at Shang Yang, Ch'in Shih Huang and other Legalists. Tung denounced Ch'in Shih Huang for "adopting the laws of Shen Pu-hai and Shang Yang, practicing the theories of Han Fei, discarding the kingly way, and associating himself with greedy wolves." ("Biography of Tung Chung-shu, History of Han") He made every effort to call for "banning the hundred schools of thought except Confucianism," and propagated a set of revivalist and regressive views of history. On the other hand, politicians and thinkers favoring greater centralized power and opposing division and secession--like Chia I, Ch'ao Ts'o and Sang Hung-yang--affirmed the historical feats in unifying China from Duke Hsiao of Ch'in to Ch'in Shih Huang, and lauded Shang Yang's reforms. The struggle between the two conceptions of history--the Confucianist and Legalist--in early Han was reflected in a concentrated way in the Salt and Iron Conference held in 81 B.C. At that meeting, a violent, big debate between the Confucian and Legalist schools was unfolded between the Legalists represented by Sang Hung-yang and the virtuous men of Confucian leaning that came from various prefectures and states. The latter, proceeding from the reactionary stand of defending the feudal secessionist forces and restoring the slave system, upheld the reactionary historical concept of returning to the old order, and launched a well-orchestrated smear campaign against Wu Ch'i, Han Fei and the Han Legalists. They charged loudly: "Shang Yang went against the way of the sage. He brought confusion to Ch'in's customs. Subsequently he ruined the government altogether. Chaos, once let loose, could not be checked." ("Condemnation of Han Fei, On Salt and Iron") They extolled Confucius, praised the past at the expense of the present, tampered with history, and distorted the facts. Sang Hung-yang sharply condemned this reactionary conception of history and highly appraised the historical exploits of the Legalists. He pointed out: "Ch'in used Lord Shang and

became rich and strong. Subsequently it founded the empire by annexing the six states." He praised Shang Yang saying, "His merits were as high as the mountain, and his name was passed down to the later generations." ("In Refutation of Shang Yang, On Salt and Iron")

Appraisals of historical figures have always served the immediate political struggle. The debate on Shang Yang between Sang Hung-yang and the virtuous men of Confucianist leaning essentially reflected the struggle between the progressive and regressive political lines within the landlord class of the Han Dynasty at that time. Clinging to the reactionary conception of history, these virtuous men of Confucian leaning attacked Shang Yang and Ch'in Shih Huang for the purpose of opposing and changing the Legalist policies of Emperor Wu of Han. Mincing no words, they said: "Now, abolishing the rules of benevolence and righteousness and appointing those favoring punishments is tantamount to restoring the schemes of Wu and Ch'in." ("Punishment and Virtue, On Salt and Iron") They believed that during the time of Emperor Wu of Han, "the policies of Shang Yang have been applied internally and the military policies of Wu Ch'i have been adopted externally." ("In Refutation of Shang Yang, On Salt and Iron") They frantically called for returning to the past. Shang Hung-yang exposed the aim of these virtuous men of Confucian leaning in "confusing fact with falsehood and speaking about the past to harm the present" as nothing other than that of overthrowing the internal and external policies of Emperor Wu in strengthening centralization and intensifying landlord class dictatorship. He dealt head-on blows to them. From Western Han to Eastern Han, the political struggle over the question of whether to go forward or backward, to work for unification or for dismemberment, had always been related to the appraisals of Shang Yang and his conception of history. Wang Ch'ung of Eastern Han praised Shang Yang saying, "As prime minister to Duke Hsiao, Shang Yang paved the way for the founding of the empire for Ch'in." ("Interpretations, Lun Heng") In the course of unifying the northern part of China in the last years of Eastern Han, Ts'ao Ts'ao also believed that "the people of Ch'in achieved domination of the world by giving priority to agriculture; Duke Hsiao pacified the western frontier by ordering troops and people in the border to reclaim wasteland. This was a fine model established by our predecessors." ("Order for Land Reclamation by Troops and People, Collection of Essays by Ts'ao Ts'ao") He adhered to Shang Yang's progressive conception of history and Legalist policies of seeking progress and opposing "veneration of the old."

Appraisal of the revolutionary measures adopted by Shang Yang and Ch'in Shih Huang to push the prefecture-county system replacing the system of setting up ducal states was another vital aspect of the Confucianist-Legalist struggle in the feudal society. By the time of the T'ang Dynasty, following the expansion of the secessionist forces of the feudal princes, the debate on whether to adopt the prefecture-county system or the system of setting up ducal states came to the fore again. The political and ideological representatives of the secessionist forces of feudal princes energetically publicized the reactionary historical concept of returning to the old order, abused Shang Yang and Ch'in Shih Huang for abolishing

vassalage and establishing prefectures and counties, and vigorously called for division and secession, thus once again stirring up an adverse current of worshipping the Confucianist school and opposing the Legalist school. Under these circumstances, Liu Tsung-yüan, using the progressive historical concept of the Legalist school as the weapon to break through the bondage of the Confucianist traditional ideology, highly appraised and affirmed the progressive significance of the prefecture-county system enforced from Shang Yang to Ch'in Shih Huang. In his famous essay, "Feng Chien Lun," employing the Legalist historical concept of a continually advancing society and beginning with the primitive stage of human society, he proved that the replacement of the system of establishing ducal states by the prefecture-county system was a big step in the right direction in history and criticized the Confucianist blind faith in the Three Kings and Five Emperors. Moreover, basing himself on the historical events of more than one thousand years from Ch'in to T'ang, he eloquently proved the much greater superiority of the prefecture-county system over the system of distributing ducal states. He fully affirmed Ch'in Shih Huang, who practiced the Legalist ideas of Shang Yang and Han Fei, as "one who did the most good for the people," saying in laudatory terms that "performance of service for the good of the country began with Ch'in." At the same time, he openly criticized Tung Chung-shu's revivalist theories for "twisting historical facts and creating confusion in the minds of the succeeding generations." He believed "the mandate comes, not from Heaven, but from the people." ("Integrity, Collection of Essays by Liu Tsung-yüan") Thus theoretically Liu Tsung-yüan forcefully struck at the revivalist ideas serving the secessionist forces of the feudal princes and played a positive role in pushing the political line of upholding unification and strengthening centralization.

After the Northern Sung Dynasty, China entered the last stages of the feudal society. As the feudal system was going downhill every day, the diehards of the big landlord class became more and more dreadful of social change, and more and more they turned to the help of the Confucianist reactionary historical concept of returning to the past. The reformers of the middle and small landlord classes represented by Wang An-shih opposed the big landlord diehards, using the progressive historical concept of the Legalist school as the ideological weapon. Conservatives represented by Ssuma Kuang, clinging to the reactionary historical concept that "the laws of ancestors cannot be changed," desperately attacked Wang An-shih's new laws, "calling those who respect laws and decrees as followers of Shang Yang and those who discuss wealth and gain as turning against Mencius." ("Wang An-shih's Reform, Complete Chronicles of Sung") Ssuma Kuang denounced Shang Yang's reform as "especially harsh," causing "the world to turn to deception and power." ("Tzu-chih T'ung-chien [A General Outline History], Vol. II") He attacked Wang An-shih's reform as "using the words of Shang Hung-yang to deceive Emperor Wu." Not lagging far behind, Su Shih successively wrote "On Shang Yang" and "On Lord Shang," in which he attacked Wang An-shih by abusing Shang Yang, saying, "application of the policies of Shang Yang and Shang Hung-yang would lead to the destruction of the state and the

ruin of the family" and would "destroy the country and cripple the economy." ("On Shang Yang, A Chronology of Events in the Collection of Essays by Su Shih") Wang An-shih, upholding the progressive historical concept of the Legalist school, maintained that "the portents of Heaven need not be feared, the examples of ancestors need not be followed, and pay no heed to what most people say." He highly lauded Shang Yang for his reform spirit of not keeping to ancient laws nor observing ancient rites. He wrote a poem to eulogize him: "People of today should not denounce Shang Yang, for he made the government work." He also lauded Sang Hung-yang and other Legalists of Han and T'ang for "destroying the old institutions and pushing a policy of annexation, bringing relief to the poor, and changing the distribution pattern of the country's wealth. That is why in later generations Sang Hung-yang and Liu Yen were so much admired." ("Wang An-shih's Reform, Complete Chronicle of Sung") He praised Li Tsung-yüan as a "rare talented man in the world," being "capable of surviving the adversities to have his name listed among those remembered in later generations." ("Reading the Biography of Liu Tsung-yüan, Collection of Essays by Wang An-shih") Both the praise and abuse of Shang Yang clearly demonstrated the two different political lines pushed by Wang An-shih and Ssuma Kuang.

After the failure of Wang An-shih's reform, the feudal society became increasingly frozen and ossified. The big landlord class became more and more decadent and reactionary, and also more virulent in its denunciation of and attack against Shang Yang. Only with the advent of China's modern times did the bourgeois revolutionist Chang T'ai-yen and others rise to reverse the verdict, praising "Shang Yang for making Ch'in richer every day by his reform." They held that "people saw only the ruthlessness of Shang Yang's laws in the early days without investigating their later effects." ("Shang Yang, Chiu Shu") To a certain extent this correctly restored the original features of history. Furthermore, in the chapter on "Origin of Changes" in his book "Chiu Shu," Chang T'ai-yen provided a fuller explanation of the origin of mankind and class society than Shang Yang and Liu Tsung-yüan did. From Shang Yang to Chang T'ai-yen, although they belonged to different epochs and different classes, yet due to their progressive roles in history, they advanced basically similar views on social history, thereby forming a progressive line of knowledge in China's ideological history. This deserves serious study by us today. We should not forget that Shang Yang, Han Fei and other Legalists were the ideological representatives of the landlord class during its revolutionary phase. Their historical concepts served the substitution of the feudal system for the slave system. Therefore, like all other progressive ideological representatives of exploiting classes in history, they could only arrive at a one-sided understanding of social history. It was beyond them to thoroughly criticize the basic historical fact of exploitation and oppression of man by man, nor was it possible for them to reveal the basic laws of development of human society. In particular, they did not understand that class struggle is the motive force for the unceasing development and progress of social history. In essence, they were historical idealists. Only the proletariat, this greatest and most progressive revolutionary class in human history, armed as it is with the Marxist theory of historical materialism, can use the

theory of class struggle to reveal the basic laws of development of human society, scientifically prove the inevitable triumph of the proletarian dictatorship over the bourgeois dictatorship and socialism over capitalism, and provide the theoretical basis for the ultimate elimination of all systems of exploitation and the realization of communism on the earth.

By taking a general view of the contention between the Confucianist and Legalist conceptions of history in Chinese history, one can clearly see that only revolutionary progressive classes can have a relatively correct conception of history, while the reactionary and declining classes are bound to cling to the regressive and reactionary conception of history and are extremely idealistic. When criticizing the reactionary film "The Story of Wu Hsün," Chairman Mao, pointing his finger at the bourgeois idealist conception of history, said: "In the view of many writers, the development of history is marked not by the supplanting of old things by the new but by all sorts of efforts made to preserve old things from dying." People from Confucius to Lin Piao have all been reactionaries who have invariably made all sorts of efforts to preserve old things and defend their reactionary acts by singing the praises of reactionaries of ancient times. With an ulterior motive, Lin Piao described the reactionary theories of the Confucianist school as "historical materialism," and this can only show them up as a band of extreme idealists. He viciously attacked and abused the Legalists as "punishers" for the purpose of giving vent to his deepseated hatred for the proletarian dictatorship and the socialist system. As shown by the historical experience of the class struggle during the socialist period, Liu Shao-ch'i, Lin Piao and political swindlers like them, in order to restore capitalism, have always used the reactionary conception of history as the ideological weapon to oppose the socialist system marked by the dictatorship of the proletariat. All reactionaries are restorationists who praise the past and castigate the present, and their ideological roots stem from the idealist conception of history calling for regression and opposing change. Only the proletariat, armed as it is with the world views of dialectical and historical materialism, can consciously recognize the laws of history and push history forward. We must deepen the criticism of Lin Piao and Confucius, persevere in taking hold of various spheres of ideology by Marxism, and fight hard for the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat!

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Biography of Wang Ch'ung

by

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Wang Ch'ung (王充), an outstanding materialist thinker of early Eastern Han, spent more than 30 years in completing his philosophical work Lun heng* (论衡), which glitters with critical and fighting brilliance. His two articles contained therein, "Questioning Confucius" and "Stabbing Mencius," in particular thrust at Confucius and Mencius like incisive swords, bravely challenging the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. Until this day they still bristle with their vigorous fighting spirit.

From Imperial College to Society

Wang Ch'ung, bearing the courtesy name of Chung-jen, was born in Shangyu, Huichi, in the third year of the reign of Emperor Kuang-wu of Han, or the year 27 A.D. The Eastern Han royal court which was then founded in pools of blood in the wake of a major peasant uprising represented in a concentrated manner the interests of the powerful landlord class. The still panic-stricken feudal ruler hastened to fuse Confucian classics with the chan** (谶) and wei** (纬) superstitutions for the purpose of using it as an ideological weapon to stabilize the rule of the big landlord class. On the one hand they set up t'ai-hsüeh*** (太学) or Imperial College to advocate worship of Confucius and study of the Classics and, on the other, preached prophetic writings and portentous omens, disguising themselves as spirits and freaks to abet religious superstitions. It was in the midst of combating this reactionary trend of thought permeated with freakish aberrations that Wang Ch'ung began to pursue his own course in life.

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* This refers to the Critical Essays written by Wang Ch'ung to attack all types of falsehoods and superstitions which flourished in his day. - Translator

** These refer to the prophetic writings recording prophecies and miracles supposed to have been handed down from high antiquity. The function of these writings was to give scriptual basis to certain actions which those aspiring to high positions might contemplate. - Translator

*** This refers to an Imperial College or government university proposed by Tung Chung-shu for the training of officials in which Confucian ideals would be taught. - Translator

Wang Ch'ung came of rather lowly stock, his ancestors being mulberry tree growers. Because of the latter's conflict with powerful families at the time, Wang Ch'ung's grandfather had to move his family from Yangt'ing to Ch'ient'ang, where he made a living in commerce, to avoid getting in the way of vengeful landlords of powerful clans. Wang Ch'ung's father had to move again to Shangyu because he had offended a powerful local despot. These persecutions and oppressions gradually brought about the decline of the Wang family which found the going tougher as the days went by. Such a family background stamped Wang Ch'ung's mind with a class brand.

Wang Ch'ung was a fighter who had fought his way out of the pedantic Confucian camp. He attended school at the age of eight, poring over such Confucian "classics" as the Analects and Book of History. Going over them day after day and year after year, Wang Ch'ung got tired of the hackneyed sayings. At about the age of 20,he said goodbye to his friends and relatives and journeyed to the Capital at Loyang to enter the Imperial College, headed by Pan Piao,then recognized as the leading Confucian scholar.

However, study life at the Imperial College soon dampened Wang Ch'ung's burning quest for knowledge. Tens of thousands of fame-seeking and odd-mannered college students, clad in loose Confucian robes and wearing high hats, had flocked to Loyang. They never opened their mouths without quoting the "early kings" and the "ways of the sages," regarding the reading of the Classics and poring prophetic writings as a shortcut to obtaining official appointments and getting rich quick. The curriculum was drab and boring, requiring the students to annotate rather than comment on what they had read. Moreover, students were forbidden to refute what their teachers, considered as scholars of wide learning, had said. Often young students would waste their lifetime on the study of the Classics and produce nearly a million words on a single annotation without acquiring any real learning and knowledge, only to excel in bragging and indulging in flattery and to become political swindlers making contacts everywhere and aspiring to fame and fortune.

Wang Ch'ung's aversion to pedantic teachers of the Confucian school made him thoroughly disgusted with the drab classic works and inflexible dogma. He was completely different from his mundane contemporaries in that he broke away from the Confucian approach to writing and read widely. He was moreover endowed with an alert mind and excelled in reasoning things out and analyzing problems. Unwilling to confine himself to the boring environment of the Imperial College which was stacked with obscure and frequently spurius ancient texts,he made up his mind to fight his way out of the school and plunge himself into society in quest of real knowledge.

To young Wang Ch'ung society served as a vast classroom. In the streets of Loyang he tried to understand the sentiments and customs of the people and study in earnest. He was so poor that he could hardly afford expensive bamboo slips which recorded ancient writings. Carrying

food with him, he would visit neighborhood bookstores where works of diverse philosophers tucked away in dust-laden shelves would often attract his greatest attention. He would pore over these works, reading them avidly and with great care.... He persisted in arduous study whether it was hot summer or chilly winter. This launched him into a lifetime career of reasoning and criticism as he devoted himself to finding out truth and falsehood among the current books and common sayings of his day.

In his criticism of the works of diverse philosophers of the Confucian school, Wang Ch'ung found much to which he could not acquiesce. He then turned to Legalist thinkers for enlightenment. After reading the Book of Lord Shang, he spoke approvingly of Shang Yang's achievements in "making the people rich and the state prosperous" and "a powerful ruler weakens the enemy." After reading Han Fei Tzu, he remarked with deep understanding: "Ch'in Shih Huang said with a sigh after he had read Han Fei's book, 'I am anxious to have Han Fei so I can be with him.' Han Fei's writing is indeed to the point and fluent, his reasoning cogent and thought-provoking." After reading Debate on Salt and Iron, he was deeply inspired by the vivid portrayal of Sang Hung-yang as he put up his case against a group of Confucianists. His conclusion was: "When two knives are used to cut things, only then can it be known which is sharp and which is blunt. Similarly, only by comparing two kinds of viewpoint can we find out which is right and which is wrong." These Legalist works enabled Wang Ch'ung to gain some definitive understanding of the life-and-death struggle between the Confucian and Legalist schools. The time Wang Ch'ung spent in Loyang poring over the works of diverse schools of philosophers went a long way toward making him a giant among the thinkers of his time.

The imperial capital of Loyang was then the Mecca for worshipping Confucianism and opposing Legalism, a center for promoting superstitious practices. Loyang therefore was definitely not the place for a rebellious student of the Imperial College like Wang Ch'ung to stay on any longer. He had to leave the Capital for his native village where he had not returned for many years. In subsequent years at his home in Huichi, Wang Ch'ung served as a minor official on a number of occasions, mostly in the capacity of ordinary staff of government offices or as an official for scrutinizing work performances. Wang Ch'ung had originally planned to enter into officialdom for the purpose of doing something good, but the hideous realities of society dashed his illusions. Under the blows of bureaucrats and despotic gentry, he was forced to resign and go back home. He began to devote his efforts to teaching and writing. As he widened his contacts with society, he dug deeper into scholastic pursuits, gathering and collating materials on folklores, legends, strange anecdotes, astrology, geography, medicine, health, insects and plants. His studies in these aspects and the extensive social investigations he had conducted broadened his vision and improved his talents, enabling him to acquire considerable knowledge he otherwise could not obtain from books. This laid a solid foundation for forming his materialist view of the natural world and an atheistic outlook.

Two Sharp Swords Thrust at Confucius and Mencius

At his home in Shangyu Wang Ch'ung assiduously began writing Lun Heng amid great hardships. It was in the reign of Emperor Ming of Han that Wang Ch'ung, being in his prime and full of vigor,use his incisive writing to fiercely attack the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. His two articles, "Questioning Confucius" and "Stabbing Mencius," shone with fighting brilliance.

In those days considerable courage would have been necessary to refute and question Confucius and Mencius. In Eastern Han Confucius was a sage above reproach and the Confucian canon defied challenge from anybody. Nurtured by reactionary Confucianism, Confucian devotees during the Han period became so versed in hypocrisy and intrigues that they banded together to practice deceit. They regarded Confucius and his canon as the ladder to personal advancement, indiscriminately worshipping the ancients and blindly honoring Confucius. What Confucius had said must never be doubted or challenged and whoever violated the law of the land would be considered as highly outrageous and should be condemned. Wang Ch'ung once recalled how Huan T'an who died not long ago of bitterness was accused of having repudiated the sage because he had been disrespectful toward Confucius and done everything he could to resist the chan and the wei, charges that would have almost doomed him. Wang Ch'ung was disturbed by the popular belief that the teachings of the sages such as Confucius should not be reviled and criticized. In his article "Questioning Confucius," Wang Ch'ung in biting language gave strong reasons why Confucius should be subjected to criticism. He pointed out incisively: What Confucius has said or written about are contradictory in many respects and therefore it would not be possible for him to state his views very appropriately. Moreover, he gets across his ideas in haste and then how could he be right all the time? Questioning Confucius and attacking him for saying the wrong things, Wang Ch'ung argued, is not inappropriate on moral grounds. Wang Ch'ung's justifiable and sternly worded denunciation thus strongly refuted the fallacy that "reviling the sages is reckless."

Citing a large number of facts and corroborative instances, Wang Ch'ung used formalistic logic to debunk Confucius and bring out the deceit and inconsistencies found in his words and deeds. He also sharply criticized the falsehood of Confucian scholars of Eastern Han and the corrupt practices prevailing in society at that time. He cited an instance known to all. Confucius cried bitterly when his favorite disciple Yen Hui died. Fearing that their master might be overwhelmed with grief, Confucius' pupils all came to him to persuade him not to grieve to excess. Confucius cried with tears in his eyes: "If I don't mourn Yen Hui, whom should I express sorrow for?" However, when Yen Hui's father pleaded with Confucius to sell his carriage and buy a coffin for Yen Hui's burial, Confucius adamantly refused to do so. "I am a senior official," he said, "I can't go out on foot." Later, he told others: "When my son died I didn't buy him a coffin, let alone Yen Hui who is not directly related to our family." Look, don't we see before our eyes a personification of a

double-dealer inconsistent in words and deeds? Like all political swindlers, Confucius turned false talk and double-dealing into a secret for dealing with people.

On another occasion, when Fo Hsi asked Confucius to accept an official appointment the latter went to him in haste. Tzu Lu was most dissatisfied and asked Confucius: "Haven't you said that gentlemen keep away from evil-doers and since Fo Hsi has betrayed his prince why then did you go to him?" Confucius admitted having said so but he argued: "Shouldn't I be hung up like a gourd and not taking any food all day long?" Wang Ch'ung questioned Confucius: If you deny what you have said is wrong and make no explanation that Fo Hsi has not done something evil, can your lame argument rebut Tzu Lu's questioning? Wang Ch'ung also laid bare Confucius' motivation when he was wandering to various states. Apart from putting into effect his reactionary political views, Wang Ch'ung observed, Confucius did so for the purpose of obtaining an official appointment so he could make a living. Despite his seeming renunciation of riches and honor, Confucius in reality was so obsessed with fortune and fame that he became as desperate as a disoriented despicable person once he failed to get an official appointment after a lapse of three months. Therefore Wang Ch'ung regarded Confucius as simply an ordinary and mediocre person not befitting a "superior man," much less a "sage."

In Wang Ch'ung's portrayal of Confucius, the latter not only resembled a double-dealer inconsistent in words and deeds but appeared to be a despicable pretender in everyday life. Wang Ch'ung debunked Confucius as he was untruthfully recorded in the Analects: Confucius went to the state of Wei and had an audience with Nan Tzu, the wife of Duke Ling of Wei, in an attempt to curry favor with the ruler of Wei. Because Confucius had demeaned himself ill, even his disciple Tzu Lu was disgusted with his master. In order to cover up his ugly behavior before the Duchess of Wei, Confucius stamped his foot and swore to Heaven: "If I have done something against my conscience, Heaven forbid , Heaven forbid!" Wang Ch'ung pointed out: Nobody has ever died because of Heaven's curses so Confucius' explanation in self-defense could hardly dispel Tzu Lu's suspicion and doubts. By using this method to prove his innocence, wasn't Confucius any different from hooligans who swore before Providence to defend their being above suspicion? With his incisive pen Wang Ch'ung ridiculed Confucius as a mean and despicable political swindler.

The barb of the chapter on "Questioning Confucius" was also directed at the Confucian idealist concept of the will of Heaven. Wang Ch'ung cited Confucius' often contradictory sayings to refute the so-called reactionary preaching that "life and death, riches and honor are determined by the will of Heaven." Confucius is recorded in the Analects as saying: "Tzu Kung went into business without heeding the arrangements made by the will of Heaven. He was successful on numerous occasions by virtue of his abilities to conclude speculative deals." These words were cited by Wang Ch'ung to refute the statement that "riches and honor are determined by Heaven," arguing that if the "will of Heaven" were at work

this would not apply in Tzu Kung's case since Confucius had said that Tzu Kung ignored the "will of Heaven." Wang Ch'ung thus dismissed Confucius' reference to "Heaven's determination of riches and honor" as rubbish and meaningless. In Wang Ch'ung's view, "Heaven" is a natural heaven without a will, incapable of doing anything. This simple, materialist concept of Heavenly Way is a perpetuation of the materialist thinking of Hsün K'uang, an outstanding representative of early Ch'in Legalists, a forceful repudiation of the idealist theory of Heavenly will espoused by the Confucianists.

Apart from boldly reprimanding Confucius, Wang Ch'ung used his pen to stab Mencius, the number two boss of the Confucian junk shop. Wang Ch'ung's chapter on "Stabbing Mencius" is a continuation of that on "Questioning Confucius." The essay sternly criticizes Mencius' mysterious theory of Heavenly mandate and his reactionary idea that a ruler's authority is bestowed by Heaven and exposes the falsehood of the cycle of history theory that "once every five hundred years a true monarch would arise." Mencius took over Confucius' theory of Heavenly mandate and preached the reactionary ideas about the "unity of man with Heaven." Talking nonsense, he said: "Once every five hundred years a wise king would appear and then world renowned people would be brought forward." This restorationist maniac unabashedly bragged: "If Heaven wished that the kingdom should enjoy tranquillity and good order, who is there besides me to bring it about?" Wang Ch'ung cited the facts of ancient history to prove that the "ruler of the empire" did not follow the cycle of five hundred years but that rulers like Ti Hao,Yao, Shun, Yü and T'ang all arose "in succession." Not a single "sage-king" had appeared in the seven hundred years from King Wen of Chou to Mencius. Both positive and negative facts belied what Mencius had said about the cycle theory. Wang Ch'ung commented with a satirical sting: "Mencius still believed in the arising of sages once every five hundred years although that had not occurred beyond the 500-year limit, showing that Mencius did not know much about the Spirits of Heaven." Debunking this Mencian fallacy, Wang Ch'ung pointed out that Mencius had vainly attempted to realize his political ambition of achieving his own predominance and restoring the "ways of the early kings." Not contented with his stay in the state of Ch'i, he went about looking for connections and aspiring to becoming a prominent sage capable of bringing "peace and order to the empire." But he lacked the necessary qualifications and ability and managed to get by through bragging and practicing intrigues. What an utterly mean and despicable person he was! The degenerate, reactionary, deceitful and hideous features of Mencius, a "lesser sage," were portrayed in Wang Ch'ung's essay "Stabbing Mencius."

Both essays by Wang Ch'ung linked with the realities of Eastern Han and provided a classic example of criticizing Confucius, serving as militant pronouncements at that time in repudiating the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius. Wang Ch'ung's daring castigation of Confucius and Mencius dealt a stunning blow to Confucianists in the Han period and had more than deterred the reactionary trend of thought of honoring Confucius and returning to the old order.

However, Wang Ch'ung's castigation of Confucius and Mencius was not without formalistic drawbacks. He did not appear to have a correct understanding of the essence of the line struggle between Confucian and Legalist schools on the ideological front at that time. Accordingly, while he was sharply criticizing and refuting Confucius and Mencius, he also wrote an article refuting Han Fei's Legalist thinking. This was due, in the last analysis, to his failure to understand the Confucian-Legalist controversy on the plane of the two-line struggle. This formalistic method of criticism rendered Wang Ch'ung's reviling of the reactionary doctrines of Confucius and Mencius more witty than penetrating and as such failed to finish them off at one stroke. This was brought about by Wang Ch'ung's class and historical limitations and therefore we should not be too demanding toward people before us.

Opposing Ghosts and Superstitions, Propagating Atheism

In the year 79 A.D., when Wang Ch'ung was 53, Emperor Chang of Han called a forum in Loyang to discuss Confucian works. Confucian scholars aspiring to fame and fortune and parasites living off prominent families flocked to Loyang, vainly trying to work out Confucian interpretations of divine revelations in order to uphold the feudal rule of the Han royal court. After the forum Pan Ku, a Confucianist, compiled the Pai-hu T'ung-i (白虎通义), which openly advocated the "three bonds and five constant virtues" and did its best to preach study of prophetic writings to avert portentous happenings, as well as Yin-Yang superstitions. For instance, the compilation did everything possible to advocate the idea that the occurrence of misfortunes and disasters throughout the world was due to the dissatisfaction of the Spirits of Heaven with the rule on earth and that these misfortunes served as a warning to man. Other warnings from Heaven took the form of thunder and lightning, which served as Heaven's punishment for certain offenders. The appearance of Pai-hu T'ung-i whipped up another more insidious anti-Legalist adverse current since Tung Chung-shu called for "revering only the Confucian school."

At the time when blind belief in prophetic writings had persisted, Wang Ch'ung found from the natural world an ideological weapon for countering religious superstitions. On one occasion, word was spread around in society that five lingchih (灵芝) plants were found growing at the home of a woman named Fu Ning in Lingling. Confucian scholars and officials lost no time in felicitating the emperor for what appeared to be an auspicious omen. They used allegories like the happy falling of dew to compliment the emperor, as if their bragging could cover up privations in society.

Wang Ch'ung dismissed these unfounded remarks and hearsay as "rubbish, pure and simple." On the basis of his many years of practice and investigations and his profound knowledge of science, he clearly pointed out: As one kind of plant, lingchih weed will grow in congenial soil and climate. This is altogether unrelated to the existing political system. He added, "An unknowing Heaven will not send down lingchih or phoenix because of the emperor's good government."

On another occasion, Wang Ch'ung heard from his neighbor that five sheep had been killed by a thunderbolt. Confucian scholars took advantage of the mishap to preach that the sheep had offended the Spirit of Thunder. They also elaborated by saying that human offenders would also be punished by death. Wang Ch'ung promptly dismissed such utterances as "preposterous." His careful observations of cases in which people were struck by thunder and lightning and died of burns on their bodies led him to conclude that fire was the source of thunder and lightning. Thereupon, he raised this question: "If Heaven is really angry and invokes thunder to scold and punish tyrants and wicked people, why then are there still so many tyrants and bad persons in ancient and modern times? Why aren't they struck down by thunder and lightning? Where after all is the Spirit of Heaven?" It was in combating the mysterious trend of thought preaching the "affinity between Heaven and man" that Wang Ch'ung vigorously refuted and rejected the Confucian belief in prophetic writings and portentous happenings and in doing so developed the materialist view of the natural order.

Undaunted Wang Ch'ung was not afraid of Heaven, ghosts or spirits. It was circulated at that time that during the Spring and Autumn period the ruler of the state of Wu killed his loyal minister Wu Tzu-hsü. The dead man's body was boiled into shreds and filled a leather bag which was thrown into the Ch'ient'ang River. It was said that the ghost of Wu Tzu-hsü was so bitter about the wrong done him that the departed spirit occasionally churned up the river waters to give vent to his grievances. This was how the Ch'ient'ang tidal wave came about. It was Wang Ch'ung who categorically debunked this preposterous tale. He said, "If the ghost of Wu Tzu-hsü really was so omnipotent, he should have displayed his prowess when his body was being boiled by the Wu monarch. Why didn't he do something about it at that moment and put off until he was thrown into the high seas?" In combating assorted superstitious beliefs in ghosts and spirits, Wang Ch'ung further expounded his materialist views on human lives. He held that the survival of man was dependent on what he called "vitality," which in turn stemmed from the blood vessels. Since a dead man's blood vessels became dried up, his body would rapidly decompose and turn into dust. How could there be ghosts? This pithy viewpoint embodied one of the theoretical foundations of Wang Ch'ung's atheist thinking.

In Eastern Han society where ghosts and demons stalked around, Wang Ch'ung wrote a large number of materialist works to preach about his atheist views. By sharply tearing apart the world of ghosts and freaks peopled by Tung Chung-shu and the compiler of Pai-hu T'ung-i, Wang Ch'ung in combat became an outstanding atheist of the Han dynasty.

Fighting in Later Years

Wang Ch'ung's condition in his later years was one of abject poverty, without any close relatives and means of subsistence. Because of old age and failing health, the hardships he had encountered could be well imagined. However, he remained as vigorous as before in his fighting spirit, surmounting every difficulty and writing indefatigably to keep castigating reactionary Confucianism and despicable Confucian devotees.

When Wang Ch'ung was 60 he accepted an official appointment from the Governor of Yangchow Tung Ch'in. Because he was fond of giving critical opinions, he was not appreciated by his superior and was demoted. When he was 62 he quit his post and returned home to resume writing and compiling books. In his Lun heng [or Critical Essays] in which he chronicled in retrospect decades of fighting, he wrote: "Though the chapters of my Critical Essays may be numbered in the tens, one phrase covers them all: hatred of fiction and falsehood." He maintained this critical spirit through the entire extant sections of his work, attacking all types of falsehoods and superstitions which flourished in his day and incisively debunking them, particularly the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius he strongly detested.

Just when Wang Ch'ung was engrossed at home in the compilation of his Critical Essays, an imperial emissary called on him to persuade him to go to Loyang to accept an official appointment. Unwilling to enter into officialdom any more, he declined on grounds of poor health. He wanted to direct his final efforts to completing his compilation work. When he was nearly 70 he completed his 84-chapter Critical Essays, with an additional chapter in the form of an autobiography recording his fighting life and explaining the purpose of his work. His other works--including "The Ridiculous Customs," "Political Affairs," and a medical treatise "Cultivation of the Spirit"--in which he discussed various subjects have since been lost. This great ancient materialist thinker died of illness in the year 96 A.D. He was 71.

For nearly two thousand years Wang Ch'ung's Critical Essays expresses China's materialist achievements under then historical conditions. The two militant essays, "Questioning Confucius" and "Stabbing Mencius," in particular fill a shining page in the history of the anti-Confucius struggle in ancient times. Accordingly, Wang Ch'ung's work was banned in those days. It was not until a thousand years later that a transcribed copy of Critical Essays was discovered and only then were printed copies circulated. Feudal ruling classes and their apologists in successive ages regarded Wang Ch'ung and his Critical Essays as destructive floods and ferocious beasts. During the Sung dynasty a reactionary Confucian scholar named Wang Ying-lin, who compiled The Three-Character Classic for primary school students, condemned Critical Essays as a "book with more than minor defects." Wang Ch'ung's "Questioning Confucius" and "Stabbing Mencius" alarmed a Ming dynasty critic, Hu Ying-lin, who denounced the essays as "offending." After reading Critical Essays, Emperor Ch'ien Lung of the Ch'ing dynasty said apprehensively: Questioning and stabbing Confucius and Mencius is a serious offense of reviling the ancient sages. Despite these vicious remarks and comments, Wang Ch'ung was praised by many progressive thinkers, including Chang T'ai-yen, a bourgeois revolutionist of modern times. Wang Ch'ung was an outstanding materialist thinker of the Han period. Slander and abuse hurled by feudal rulers and their apologists failed to cover up the brilliance of Wang Ch'ung's progressive ideas. His critical essays attacking the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius shine even today with undimmed luster.

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On Ts'ao Ts'ao's Worship of Legalism and Opposition to Confucianism

by

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Ts'ao Ts'ao (曹操, 155-220 A.D.), alias Meng-te, was born in what is now Hao hsien in Anhwei. In his childhood he turned away from Confucian practices and "read widely and exhibited a penchant for the art of war."* He favored enforcement of punishment strictly according to a legal standpoint and on the basis of government by law. In history he was thus a relatively progressive-minded landlord statesman and military strategist.

I

Ts'ao Ts'ao lived in a period which coincided with the initial stages of China's feudal society. The brutal exploitation and oppression of the peasantry by the landlord class resulted in the major Yellow Turban uprising. This dealt stunning blows to the powerful and despotic landlords who had dominated the Eastern Han royal court. There were abrupt and radical changes after 190 A.D. The domination of the Eastern Han royal court gave way to the sweeping impact of the peasant wars. Regional forces which began to expand from the Eastern Han period came into the open to divide and rule. This brought about strife for plundering the fruits of peasant wars. With the gathering clouds signaling an approaching storm, the situation then was one of disorderly and confused strivings among warlords. Marx pointed out: "No society in any form will perish before all the production forces it is capable of accommodating are released."** Since at that time the feudal production relations were slowly moving toward consolidation and development, inevitably there was a need to put an end to the feudal divisions hampering social economic development and only the achievement of feudal unification could facilitate the development of productive forces. At that moment, the strife for unification and centralized power and against splits and decentralization of power was crucial to the strife between the decadent and newly rising forces within the landlord class.

Ts'ao Ts'ao unified the northern part of China, a historical figure who laid the foundation for Western Tsin to unify China. In

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* "Chronicle of Emperor Wu, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

** Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Vol. II, p. 83.

his comment on San Kuo Chih, Chen Shou said Ts'ao Ts'ao enforced the laws formulated by Shen Pu-hai and Shang Yang and that Ts'ao Ts'ao's political foes likewise paid tribute to his "enlightened government by law." Ts'ao Ts'ao had in fact implemented reforms based on government by law since he moved Emperor Hsien of Han to Hsuch'ang in 196 A.D.

First, implementing the law of giving land to military colonists.

In order to consolidate ruling power and solve the problem of military supplies, Ts'ao Ts'ao in the year 196 adopted Tsao Ch'i's proposal based on the "t'un t'ien" (屯田) system employed during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, a system of para-military feudal exploitation and oppression upon which feudal production relations were established through nationalization of the feudal land. The system was first introduced in Hsuhsia.

With military factions battling each other, accompanied by endless rape, killing and burning of buildings, the people were plunged into the abyss of misery. They "dispatched troops to rob and besiege cities and towns"* or "connive at soldiers ransacking and plundering private possessions with the result that half of the inhabitants of the land died."** This caused great damage to social production. In these circumstances it was indeed commendable for Ts'ao Ts'ao to get hold of "t'un t'ien" for the purpose of restoring production. Among his subordinates, there was an acute struggle regarding the issue of how to deal with wasteland. Taking advantage of "dispossessed land," some Confucian scholars vainly tried to turn such land into "public fields" and advocated "restoration of the ching-t'ien system."*** Overruling this attempt to roll the wheel of history back, Ts'ao Ts'ao favored the introduction of the "t'un t'ien" system. This laid the material foundation for eliminating the domination of military factions in the north.

In the year 204 A.D. Ts'ao Ts'ao promulgated laws to restrain and repress the powerful and strong. For example, when powerful landlords like Jen Chün, Li Tien and Hsü Ch'u led their followings and turned to Ts'ao Ts'ao, they were all deprived of the powers over their direct subordinates. Yang Piao, for another instance, came of a powerful and big clan and the descendant of prominent Confucianists. Ts'ao Ts'ao thereupon suppressed and attacked him, using his marriage with Yuan Shu as the pretext. Many officials who served under Ts'ao Ts'ao implemented in varying degrees the spirit of government by law by uprooting the powerful and strong.

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* "Biography of Tung Cho, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

** "Biography of Ssu-ma Lang, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

*** Ibid.

During the Eastern Han period the central administration was under the control of powerful clans and illustrious families, such as the House of Ma, the House of Tou and the House of Liang. Most of the senior ministers were powerful landlords. Although some eunuehs were not themselves powerful landlords, they were able to influence the emperor and thus they perpetrated misdeeds and extorted others as they pleased. Therefore they became the representatives of powerful landlords. Liang Chi, for instance, was one of them. He forced farmers to be his bondservants. The local despots owned large tracts of fertile fields, with thousands of slaves and maidservants and tens of thousands of dependent peasants at their beck and call. These despots were like feudal vampires by retaining the vestiges of the slave system and providing the class basis of feudal divisions. Ts'ao Ts'ao did away with all these feudal trappings that had been part of the Eastern Han royal court and the divisive forces in the empire. He dared to restrain and repress the powerful and broke away from the fetters of the conservative forces. In doing so on the basis of government by law, he thus had access to conditions that enabled him to defeat various military factions.

Second, "recommending only those that are capable and talented."

In order to strengthen administration of centralized power, Ts'ao Ts'ao in the year 210 A.D. decreed a quest for men of wisdom and virtue. This move to "recommend only those that are capable" was again initiated in 214 and 217. Selection was based on the qualifications of the applicants, such as their administrative abilities and knowledge of directing military campaigns, their bravery and valor, regardless of their family and professional backgrounds and personal character. In this regard, Ts'ao Ts'ao placed primacy on political criteria but to the exclusion of those that were adhered to by the honor-Confucianism groups. On the basis of these criteria, Ts'ao Ts'ao picked Yü Chin and Lo Chin from battles and Chang Liao and Hsü Huang from the captives. "Countless others of humble origins were assigned to minor official posts."*

Ts'ao Ts'ao's approach to the question of "recommending only those that are capable" to fill official posts embodied the concrete application of the legal viewpoint. The Legalists in the early Ch'in period were among those who advocated discontinuation of the system of herditary office and hereditary emoluments and favored the selection of the wise and capable. Shang Yang, for instance, expounded the theory of "recommending the wise and capable, this being the cause of good order in the world."** Ts'ao Ts'ao himself admitted that he was inspired by Han Fei's reference to "employment of those that are virtuous and capable."

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* "Chronicle of Emperor Wu, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

** "On Law, Book of Lord Shang."

Ts'ao Ts'ao was strict in giving rewards and meting out punishments. He said, "A thousand pieces of gold will go to the deserving ones, but not a tiny fraction /of a piece of gold/ will be given to those who have rendered no meritorious service.* He also said, "The offenders must be punished."** He rewarded and punished his troops, both officers and ranks alike, according to the satisfactory or unsatisfactory manner in which they enforced laws. After a battle, the defeated would be punished while those who miscarried orders would be deprived of their official titles. As to those who had rendered meritorious service, "their merits will be recorded and favors granted."+ Ts'ao Ts'ao directed his troops strictly according to the military tactics expounded by Sun Tzu and Wu Ch'i. This was conceded even by his political opponents.

Why, then, did Ts'ao Ts'ao adopt government by law?

Legalist ideas, a product of the period when feudal society was on the ascent, provided the landlord class with an ideological weapon to strengthen their spirits and brace themselves up for measures leading to sound government. The struggle between worship of Legalism and opposition to Confucianism and between worship of Confucianism and opposition to Legalism in Chinese history occurred mostly during the periods when feudal divisions moved toward feudal unification, or when the feudal royal courts were in the grip of crises. Some feudal rulers would then adjust the state machine in order to strengthen centralization of power. This was aimed at "establishing a kind of 'order' to legalize this oppression and make it a fixed pattern so class conflicts may be eased."++ This was in line with the policy of "making the country prosper and troops strong," moves that marked a departure from the old order but followed the examples of later kings, thus bringing into play the bolstering effects of the superstructure on the economic base. At the end of the Eastern Han period, Confucian ideology increasingly became the spiritual prop of feudal divisive forces, hampering the realization of feudal unification. This more than anything else made Ts'ao Ts'ao turn to government by law and reject government according to rules of propriety. His reference to the creed stressing the "primary importance of punishment to the restoration of order"+++ reflected Ts'ao Ts'ao's espousal of the Legalist preoccupation with reform and his disavowal of old practices.

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* Ibid.

** Ts'ao Ts'ao, "Annotation of Sun Tzu."

\+ "Biography of Lo Chin, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

++ Selected Works of Lenin, Vol. III, p. 176.

+++ "Biography of Kao Jou, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

Of course Ts'ao Ts'ao's idea in this regard was class-oriented since he abolished, not the distinctions between the rich and the poor and between noble and common, but those between powerful landlords and humble ones.

Confucian ideology was the state orthodoxy at the Eastern Han royal court. The criteria for official appointments were primarily based on caste standing, the system of rigid social stratification characterized by hereditary status and social barriers sanctioned by custom. This hereditary conferment of official positions was in force during the Eastern Han period. Many prominent Confucian scholars used their honor and reputation and their general deportment as a means to achieving social advancement. Posing as filial sons, loyal ministers and faithful friends, they made empty remarks and were capable of doing nothing. They were just political swindlers who were inconsistent in words and deeds. Therefore, Ts'ao Ts'ao's approach to the employment of people did away with the division of society based upon differences of wealth, inherited rank or privilege, possession or occupation. This eliminated the criteria for employing people based on much vaunted claims of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence and righteousness and became an important program of reform which contributed to the repression of the powerful and mighty, worship of Legalism and opposition to Confucianism.

Third, Ts'ao Ts'ao directed his troops according to law.

In I Ling, Ts'ao Ts'ao said: "I follow the laws in directing the troops."* In the course of directing his troops, he formulated numerous military directives and laws. In one directive, for instance, "the soldiers on the march are forbidden to fell the plants in the fields."** In another directive, "fighters going into battle are forbidden to take cattle and horses, clothing and other possessions; and the offenders shall be beheaded. In the course of fighting, soldiers must follow orders, and if they do not, they will not be rewarded even when they perform with merit."+ These and other directives went a long way toward tightening the centralized direction of the troops, strengthening discipline and doing away with feudal divisions.

In running his troops, Ts'ao Ts'ao gave importance to people who ran law-enforcing organizations. He dismissed those who were unfamiliar with law enforcement and favored employment of those who "are familiar with laws and regulations."++

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* "Chronicle of Emperor Wu, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

** T'ung Tien, Vol. 149.

\+ Ibid.

++ "Chroncile of Emperor Wu, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

II

Ts'ao Ts'ao achieved the broad unification of the northern part of China in struggles to oppose worship-Confucianism and oppose-Legalism trends that had prevailed within and outside his domain.

Most military factions in the last years of the Eastern Han period represented the interests of the powerful and the mighty, being worshippers of Confucianism and opponents of Legalism. Both Lu Chih and Kungsun Tsan, who were Ts'ao Ts'ao's contemporaries on the ascent, were corrupt Confucian devotees. T'ao Ch'ien, who "trusted the wrong people and ignored government based on a penal code,"* was a militarist devoted to Confucianism and hostile to government by law. Yuan Shao, who was himself a powerful landlord, rallied many Confucianists to back Liu Yu, a Confucian devotee, to become emperor. Yuan Shao was also a believer in a return to the old order. He took a retrograde step by making each of his sons and nephews occupy a piece of territory the size of chou. This act of perversion running counter to the tide of history sealed his fate of destruction. In his early years at Chinchow, Liu Piao "began to set up schools to pursue Confucianism on a wide scale"** and vigorously promoted government according to rules of propriety. Therefore, despite his cunning stand he took at the time when military factions were locked in battles, he was eventually not spared from destruction. As regards Sun Ch'üan in the days of the "three kingdoms," he was a Legalist but was contented with partial peace that secured his domain south of the Yangtse River. This indicated that he was less ambitious /than the rulers of the other two kingdoms/. Rivalling Ts'ao Ts'ao in adherence to the Legalist practice of government by law was Chu-ko Liang, who initiated "a severe and radical penal code."+ But in strength Shu was no match for Wei, because that kingdom was strategically subjected to numerous restrictions. On the other hand, although Liu Pei "was behind Wei and Wu in point of political maneuverings and devising stratagems in times of exigency, he had no access to a broad foundation."++ In these circumstances, he had to confine himself to the southwest corner and in promoting government by law he was far less firm and decisive than Ts'ao Ts'ao. Thus, the latter's broad unification of the northern part of China was attributable to his triumph in the struggle for Legalism and against Confucianism.

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* "Biography of T'ao Ch'ien, History of Later Han."

** "Biography of Liu Piao, History of Later Han."

\+ "Biography of Chu-ko Liang, History of Shu, Records of Three Kingdoms."

++ "Biography of Liu Pei, History of Shu, Records of Three Kingdoms."

A fierce struggle between those who honored Legalism and those who worshipped Confucianism also raged within the ranks of Ts'ao Ts'ao. The former were strongly in favor of government by law and advocated reform. They included civilian officials like Man Ch'ung, Ssuma Chih, Wang Hsiu and Chao Yen, the military officers such as Ts'ao Jen, Yü Chin and Lo Chin. The latter favored government according to rules of propriety and opposed reform. This conservative faction was represented by Pien Jang, K'ung Jung, Wei Feng, Yang Hsiu and Hsün Yü. The struggle between these two factions was most acute.

Pien Jang, Ch'en Liu's "famous scholar," was accorded preferential treatment by Ho Chin, who tried to influence the Confucianist faction. As a result, Pien Jang's fame spread and even K'ung Jung and Wang Lang conceded his predominance. This dwarf "prided himself on his learning and refused to submit himself to Ts'ao Ts'ao, whom he had often slighted."* He therefore did his best to deprecate the reform measures initiated by Ts'ao Ts'ao. In the year 194 A.D. when Ts'ao Ts'ao was attacking Hsuchow, he jeered at Ts'ao Ts'ao and denounced his unifying war. Ts'ao Ts'ao unhesitatingly ordered Pien Jang to be executed. From then on the struggle between those who honored Legalism and those who revered Confucianism came into the open.

A looming and far greater strife was to occur about the killing of K'ung Jung. A descendant of Confucius, K'ung Jung by heredity came of a powerful landlord family. When he was Minister of Peihai, he "set up schools, commended those with scholastic records, and recommended men worthy of promotion,"** thus turning Peihai into a domain under the influence of Confucianism. After associating himself with Ts'ao Ts'ao, he used the past to satirize the present and resisted government by law. He was frantically opposed to the introduction of social reforms and held that government by law had undermined both government according to rules of propriety and the old customs. He viewed "any change in administration as undesirable"+ in an attempt to obstruct reform. In addition, K'ung Jung incited senior ministers to petition the emperor about the fallacy of returning to the old order. He urged Ts'ao Ts'ao to "follow the old institutions" and revive the system of dividing the land into fiefs. This threadbare utterance exactly conformed to the wishes of military factions dividing up the land and ran counter to the trend of historical development. Apart from going out of his way to extol Pien Jang, K'ung Jung praised Ni Heng even more lavishly, particularly the latter's "brilliant quality and outstanding ability."++ Both K'ung Jung and Ni Heng extolled

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* "Biography of Pien Jang, History of Later Han."

** "Biography of K'ung Jung, History of Later Han."

\+ Ibid.

++ "Biography of Ni Heng, History of Later Han."

each other. "Ni Heng told K'ung Jung, 'You have immortalized Confucius,' to which K'ung Jung replied, 'You are a resurrection of Yen Hui.'"* K'ung Jung was also a leader of Confucian literati. Wherever he went, he would form factions for private ends to widen his personal influence and interfere with administration. Consequently, "all the senior ministers assumed their duties in name only." When the ministers returned from a court meeting they would often credit K'ung Jung with having presided over court deliberations. The latter thus virtually became the doyen of the Confucianist faction. After Pien Jang was executed by Ts'ao Ts'ao, K'ung Jung went into close combat to oppose reforms, hurling invectives and using abusive language at will to attack the court. He even openly opposed Ts'ao Ts'ao's measure to conserve grain and prohibit the distilling of wine, which "has been a boon for a long time." In the year 197 A.D. when Ts'ao Ts'ao implemented the policy of restraining the powerful and ordered the arrest of Yang Piao, a powerful person, K'ung Jung openly interfered to defend Yang Piao. He told Ts'ao Ts'ao threateningly that if he killed Yang Piao "K'ung Jung and all men will leave the state of Lu tomorrow."** When Yang Piao was under trial and interrogated, the strife between the Legalist and Confucian factions became even more intense. Accordingly, Hsün Yü, a high official with the rank of minister, and K'ung Jung secretly approached Man Ch'ung and pleaded with him to spare Yang Piao from the interrogation. But Man Ch'ung refused to consider their request and proceeded with the "interrogation according to law."+ In the year 208 A.D., K'ung Jung became even more blatant as he "gathered his followers with the intention of scheming and plotting sedition."++ Furthermore, he "slandered and reviled the administration" for the purpose of swaying public opinion in favor of his conspiracy to seize power. Ts'ao Ts'ao had no choice but to "imprison him."+++ This shows Ts'ao Ts'ao's action in removing K'ung Jung was another victory for the honor-Legalism and oppose-Confucianism cause, being of positive significance to the repression of the powerful and deflation of the arrogance of the Confucian faction.

In the year 212 A.D., Ts'ao Ts'ao forced Hsün Yü to commit suicide. The latter came of a family of bureaucrats and landlords, whose ancestors for generations were Confucianists. As Ts'ao Ts'ao's counselor, he rose to become a high official with the rank of minister. But Hsün Yü was in favor of government according to rules of propriety. He urged

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* "Biography of K'ung Jung, History of Later Han."

** "Biography of Yang Chen, History of Later Han."

\+ "Biography of Man Ch'ung, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

++ "Biography of K'ung Jung, History of Later Han."

+++ Ibid.

Ts'ao Ts'ao to "recruit capable men versed in Confucianism throughout the empire" and to "exalt the study of propriety so teaching may be gradually put in order,"* in an attempt to make the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius the ruling ideology. As K'ung Jung's close friend and Yang Piao's shield, Hsün Yü in the year 212 viewed Ts'ao Ts'ao's ascent to the post of Duke of Wei as "an act of transgressing and overstepping one's proper rank," a fallacy preached by Confucius, and persuaded Ts'ao Ts'ao to "decline in favor of another out of a sense of loyalty and integrity."** Hsün Yü therefore followed what Pien Jang and K'ung Jung had done before, that is, slandering the Legalist faction. By forcing Hsün Yü to commit suicide, Ts'ao Ts'ao thus eliminated another lurking danger inside his administration.

Not reconciled to their defeat, the honor-Confucianism faction rallied their followers in a vain attempt to start an armed revolt. Wei Feng was known for his "ability to mislead the public." Judging by the company he kept, he should be a prominent Confucianist. In the year 219 A.D., Wei Feng "secretly gathered his followers" and plotted a seditious attack with Ch'en I. Unfortunately, the plot was discovered. Wei Feng was killed while scores of accomplices including Yang Chün, a pupil of Pien Jang, the two sons of Wang Ts'an, a worthy Confucian scholar, and the descendants of Liu Kung, a prominent scholar, were rounded up. Even Chung Yao, a high official, was dismissed from office. In the same year, Ts'ao Ts'ao executed Yang Hsiu, son of Yang Piao. This brought to an end the struggle between the worship-Legalism and honor-Confucianism groupings. In short, the reforms initiated by Ts'ao Ts'ao had been doggedly resisted by the conservative forces in the ideological sphere and only after repeated political struggles did he succeed in putting government by law into effect.

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Ts'ao Ts'ao after all was a feudal ruler. In his hands government by law was nothing but a tool for stepping up even more nakedly the dictatorship of the landlord class. Therefore, his rule was characterized by ruthlessness. For instance, he directed his troops according to law with a view to putting down peasant uprisings by armed force. Military and other decrees he had formulated only served the purpose of upholding the interests of the landlord class and making suppression of popular resistance more effective. For another instance, one section of the "military code" stipulated that army deserters would incriminate their immediate family members, a futile attempt to use severe punishment to discourage army revolts. Chairman Mao has pointed out: "In class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind

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* "Biography of Hsün Yü, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms," quoting Spring and Autumn of Master Wei.

** "Biography of Hsün Yü, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class." The ruthlessness of Ts'ao Ts'ao's rule underlies the ideology with which the landlord class intensified its oppression and exploitation of the working people.

Furthermore, Ts'ao Ts'ao's worship of Legalism and opposition of Confucianism had its class limitations. In the first place, he instituted laws for the sole purpose of restraining and repressing those powerful forces which sought to undermine the t'un t'ien system and arch offenders who refused to submit to him. Instead, he made no attempt to crush the powerful forces, much less in doing away with the latter's brutal exploitation of the peasants. On the contrary, many of the powerful had been accepted by Ts'ao Ts'ao as his subordinates, some having risen to positions of importance. Ssuma I was a representative one. The ascent of the Ssuma clan could be traced to Hsia and the war between Ch'u and Han. Ssuma Mao, a Chao general, was his ancestor. The Ssuma clan was long before that powerful landlords in Wen hsien, Hopei. Ts'ao Ts'ao's approach to handling Ssuma I was characterized by restraining his hand while making use of him. His employment of men like Ssuma I facilitated the powerful landlords so they could honor Confucianism and oppose Legalism. On the other hand, Ts'ao Ts'ao gradually changed from honoring Legalism and opposing Confucianism to honoring Confucianism and opposing Legalism with the gradual realization of the unification cause, stabilization of his rule and the ascent of the powerful forces of the landlords. This approach was in line with the creed Ts'ao Ts'ao had espoused, namely: "While pursuance of enlightened rule based on rules of propriety should be stressed in times of tranquillity and order, in times of turmoil and disorder primary emphasis should be placed on strict conformity to a penal code."* Therefore, in the year 203 A.D. when Ts'ao Ts'ao had gained a position of superiority in the north, he decreed observance of the Confucian doctrine of "benevolence, righteousness, propriety and a sense of humility."** This infusion of Confucian preachings into the formal structure of governmental institutions emphasizing strict conformity to the law became, in Ts'ao Ts'ao's later years, a means to swaying public opinion in favor of his becoming "King Wen of Chou" through the influence exerted by the Confucian concept of Heavenly mandate. This shows that Ts'ao Ts'ao enforced rule by law to meet the political needs of the landlord class in the same manner he would further government according to rules of propriety in order to meet the needs of its rule, there being no unbridgeable gulf between the two approaches.

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* "Biography of Kao Jou, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

** "Chronicle of Emperor Wu, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

The rise of the powerful forces of the landlord class prompted their protege, Ts'ao P'i, who had just "usurped" the Han throne and founded the state of Wei under Ts'ao's rule, to pronounce the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius as state orthodoxy on the ground their doctrines constituted the "fulfillment of the preachings of the sages."* K'ung Hsien was made a noble, with the rank of a marquis. He was given a fief of a hundred households, "a small feudal state named after Confucius."** Thus the conservative forces of the Confucianists began to prevail. By then, Ts'ao Ts'ao's rule by law had been replaced by government according to rules of propriety. Ts'ao P'i further decreed criteria for official appointments on the basis of "probationary appointment of Confucian scholars versed in the Classics and the Six Arts."*** This made it possible for Confucianists to replace all the Legalists employed by the royal court and hoisted the banner of honoring Confucianism and opposing Legalism, strengthening a dictatorial rule over the peasantry. Thereupon, sticking to the old order became the only creed for consolidating rule.

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* "Chronicle of Emperor Wen, History of Wei, Records of Three Kingdoms."

** Ibid.

*** Ibid.

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